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SUBJECT: President Yar'Adua's First Appointments

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11. Summary: President Yar'Adua made some of the first official appointments to his government on May 30. He announced that Ambassador Babagana Kingibe is the new Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), while Major-General Abdullahi Mohammed retains the post of Chief of Staff and Major-General Abdullahi Mukhtar will continue to serve as the National Security Advisor (NSA). Finally, Mike Mbama Okiro became Acting Inspector General of Police on June 1. There is an ongoing process to vet candidates for other top staff positions and Ministerial seats. However, Ministerial candidates are not likely to be named until later this month and candidates need to be confirmed by the Nigerian Senate, which is in recess until the last week of June. End Summary.

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Kingibe is SGF  
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12. Babagana Kingibe has taken over for Chief Ufot Ekaete as the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), a key position

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in the presidency which is roughly equivalent to the American President's Chief of Staff. The SGF coordinates cabinet meetings and provides policy direction to political appointees and agencies under the presidency. He is usually a trusted associate of the president and is therefore influential to key decisions and policy outcomes. The SGF is often a serving or retired career civil servant with wide-range of experience in public service. Nigerians at times read the mood of the government through SGF. As SGF, Babagana Kingibe should help President Yar'Adua understand the intrigues and workings of government at the federal level. He will need to serve as a bridge between the North and the South having been a high level politician with a network of contacts across Nigeria.

13. Babagana Kingibe, administrator, broadcaster, lecturer, career diplomat and politician, was the vice-presidential running mate to the late Chief Moshood Abiola in the annulled 1993 presidential election. He was a political ally of the late General Shehu Yar'Adua, senior brother of President Yar'Adua and founder of Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM), the most influential political association in Nigeria. Kingibe was a member of the PDM's think-tank. He studied at the University of Sussex, England and the BBC Training School in London. He taught Political Science at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria between 1969 and 1970. As a broadcaster, Kingibe worked as head of Current Affairs and Features Department at the Northern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation, now Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria. He was Nigerian Ambassador to

Greece with concurrent accreditation to Cyprus from 1981-84 and Pakistan from 1984-87. He was secretary of Constituent Assembly 1988-89.

14. Kingibe, aged 62, until recently the African Union (AU) Special Representative for Darfur, is a consummate politician who had also served as national chairman of defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) 1992-93. He is very familiar with the workings of government and had served as Minister for Foreign Affairs; Internal Affairs; Power and steel.

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Continuity for NSA, COS  
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15. President Umar Yar'Adua retained Generals Abdullahi Mohammed as Chief of Staff and Abdullahi Sarki Mukhtar as National Security Adviser. These two retired generals held the same portfolios in the Obasanjo administration. Their retention is supposed to help Yar'Adua keep tabs on the military since he does not belong to that constituency. Thus apart from continuity of policies, their staying behind may ward off any possible attempts to seize power by ambitious military officers.

16. General Mukhtar was born in 1949 and hails from Kano. He joined the army in 1968 and retired in 1999. While in the Nigerian army, he served as the military governor of Katsina and Kaduna States. He was appointed NSA last year following the exit of General Aliyu Mohammed. Prior to this, Mukhtar served as Nigeria's ambassador to Russia.

17. Retired General Mohammed has been in the presidential villa since the emergence of General Abdulsalami Abubakar as Nigerian leader in 1998. A former Director of Military Intelligence, Mohammed was instrumental to the successful coup d'etat against General Yakubu Gowon in 1975 that ushered in Murtala/Obasanjo regime. He was appointed military governor of Benue State as a reward for his pivotal role in the coup. Mohammed was a key figure

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throughout the lifetime of the first and second coming of the Obasanjo administration.

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Police Shake-Up  
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18. The Presidency announced on May 30 that former Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sunday Ehindero was to hand over power to his most senior deputy at a ceremony June 1. Nigerian press reported widely that Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Ogbonnaya Onovo, who headed the Administration and Finance Department, was the most senior and would take charge. However, plans changed by June 1, and Ehindero handed over power to DIG Mike Mbama Okiro instead. There has been a great deal of speculation about the sudden about face, including accusations that there may have been some scandal connected to Onovo's tenure at the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in 1998. Igbo organizations and prominent human rights lawyer Gani Fawehinmi have accused Yar'Adua of passing over Onovo because he is Igbo. Critics claim that Igbos have been deliberately excluded from serving as IGP since independence.

19. Mike Mbama Okiro was born July 24, 1949 in Egbema, an area that was then the East Central State. (His home has since been part of Imo, and is currently in Rivers due to boundary changes.) He is an ethnic Igbo. He holds a B.A. from the University of Ibadan, and MPA from University of Lagos, and a law degree from University of Jos. He has been in the Nigerian Police Force since 1977 and was praised for his work as Lagos State Police Commissioner for fighting crime and keeping "area boys" and the Oodua People's Congress under control.

110. In his first public statement June 5, IGP Okiro told the press that he is eliminating police road blocks with immediate effect, saying that the road blocks were "a bastion of corruption and other vices associated with the police." He pledged to reform the police

to improve service delivery, increase respect for human rights, and fight corruption. He announced the creation of 12 anti-corruption teams in the six geopolitical zones, which will be equipped with hotline numbers to receive complaints from the public.

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Federal Character  
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¶11. Section 14, subsection 3 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution says that "the composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity." In practice, this constitutional clause has been implemented as a kind of affirmative action program, whereby where all states and ethnic groups must be represented in federal appointments. In ministerial appointments, each state must have at least one indigene serving as a Minister. In order to help achieve this state by state balance, the PDP instructed all state chapters and governors of the party to submit names of 3 party members from their state for consideration as Ministers.

¶12. President Yar'Adua has followed the path of federal character in his recent appointments. Kingibe is Kanuri from the Northeast, Mukhtar is Hausa/Fulani from Northwest, Mohammed belongs to Yoruba ethnic group from Northcentral, while Okiro is an ethnic Igbo who hails from Rivers State. Other subsequent Villa staff appointments may follow the same pattern.

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Comment  
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¶13. There is a great deal of lobbying and jostling for positions occurring in Abuja this month, but meanwhile many Ministries and government offices remain empty and adrift. We do not expect formal announcement of Ministerial candidates until the end of June, and those nominees will need to be screened by the Nigerian Senate when it reconvenes during the final week of June. Observers will be watching to see whether many players are retained from the Obasanjo government as sign of Yar'Adua's perceived loyalty or independence.  
End comment.

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